TELLS THE FACTS AND NAMES THE NAMES

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Iran and Russia Battle U.S. - Sanctioned Heroin Plague
They Fight Alone

By Peter Lee

For Iran, the struggle against Afghan opium is a national epic, inspiring the expenditure of thousands of lives and hundreds of millions of dollars to build a massive, 1,000-kilometer bulwark of troops, berms, and 14-foot-deep trenches against smuggled drugs on its eastern border. At the same time, Russia's leadership considers the war against Afghan heroin as part of its struggle to preserve the Russian nation against demographic and social collapse. However, thanks to America's desire to isolate and ignore the regimes in Tehran and Moscow, they are forced to fight their battles alone.

Because Afghanistan's burgeoning drug industry is one of the few effective levers available to Washington in a chaotic warzone that has resisted all efforts to pacify it, the Obama administration has taken an apparent back step in its Afghan control efforts, at Russia and Iran's expense. And there are signs that Washington regards the losses and suffering inflicted upon its antagonists in Iran and Russia as acceptable "collateral damage" – or, perhaps, even a fringe benefit – of its war in Afghanistan.

Both Iran and Russia regard Washington's blithe tolerance of the Afghan opium industry with resentment and despair. The resultant stew of anger, suspicion and antagonism – and also addiction, crime, and insurgency – will probably poison Central Asia long after the United States has closed the books on its mission in Afghanistan.

Americans are aware that Afghan opium production has skyrocketed since the U.S.-led invasion of 2002, soaring from 185 tons in the last year of Taliban rule (an artificial low: opium production

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How the CIA is Welcoming Itself Back onto American University Campuses
Silent Coup

By David Price

Throughout the 1970s, '80s and '90s, independent grassroots movements to keep the Central Intelligence Agency off American university campuses were broadly supported by students, professors and community members. The ethos of this movement was captured in Ami Chen Mills' 1990 book, *C.I.A. Off Campus*. Mills' book gave voice to the multiple reasons why so many academics opposed the presence of the CIA on university campuses: reasons that ranged from the recognition of secrecy's antithetical relationship to academic freedom, to political objections to the CIA's use of torture and assassination, to efforts on campuses to recruit professors and students, and the CIA's longstanding role in undermining democratic movements around the world.

For those who lived through the dramatic revelations of the congressional inquiries in the 1970s, documenting the CIA's routine involvement in global and domestic atrocities, it made sense to construct institutional firewalls between an agency so deeply linked with these actions and educational institutions dedicated to at least the promise of free inquiry and truth. But the last dozen years have seen retirements and deaths among academics who had lived through this history and had been vigilant about keeping the CIA off campus; furthermore, with the attacks of 9/11 came new campaigns to bring the CIA back onto American campuses.

Henry Giroux's 2007 book, *The University in Chains: Confronting the Military-Industrial Academic Complex*, details how two decades of shifts in university funding brought increased intrusions by corporate and military forces onto university. After 9/11, the intelligence agencies pushed campuses to see the CIA and campus secrecy in a new light, and, as traditional funding sources for social science research declined, the intelligence community gained footholds on campuses.

Post-9/11 scholarship programs like the Pat Roberts Intelligence Scholars Program (PRISP) and the Intelligence Community Scholarship Programs today sneak unidentified students with undisclosed links to intelligence agencies into university classrooms (both were first exposed by this author here in CounterPunch in 2005). A new generation of so-called flagship programs have quietly taken root on campuses, and, with each new flagship, our universities are transformed into vessels of the militarized state, as academics learn to sublimate unease.

The programs most significantly linking the CIA with university campuses are the "Intelligence Community Centers for Academic Excellence" (ICCAE, pronounced "Icky") and the "Intelligence Advance Research Projects Activity". Both programs use universities to train intelligence personnel by piggybacking onto existing educational programs. Campuses that agree to see these outsourced programs as nonthreatening to their open educational and research missions are rewarded with funds and useful contacts with the intelligence agencies and other less tangible benefits.

Even amid the militarization prevailing in America today, the silence surrounding this quiet installation and spread of programs like ICCAE is extraordinary. In the last four years, ICCAE has gone further in bringing government intelligence organizations openly to American university campuses than any previous

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intelligence initiative since World War Two. Yet, the program spreads with little public notice, media coverage, or coordinated multicampus resistance.

When the New Infiltration Began

In 2004, a $250,000 grant was awarded to Trinity Washington University by the Intelligence Community for the establishment of a pilot "Intelligence Community Center of Academic Excellence" program. Trinity was, in many ways, an ideal campus for a pilot program. For a vulnerable, tuition-driven, struggling financial institution in the D.C. area, the promise of desperately needed funds and a regionally assured potential student base, linked with or seeking connections to the D.C. intelligence world, made the program financially attractive.

In 2005, the first ICCAE centers were installed at ten campuses: California State University San Bernardino, Clark Atlanta University, Florida International University, Norfolk State University, Tennessee State University, Trinity Washington University, University of Texas El Paso, University of Texas-Pan American, University of Washington, and Wayne State University. Between 2008-2010, a second wave of expansion brought ICCAE programs to another twelve campuses: Carnegie Mellon, Clemson, North Carolina A&T State, University of North Carolina-Wilmington, Florida A&M, Miles College, University of Maryland, College Park, University of Nebraska, University of New Mexico, Pennsylvania State University, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute.

But the CIA and FBI aren't the only agencies from the Intelligence Community that ICCAE brings to American university campuses. ICCAE also quietly imports a smorgasbord of fifteen agencies – including the National Security Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, and Homeland Security.

ICCAE's stated goals are to develop a "systematic long-term program at universities and colleges to recruit and hire eligible talent for IC [Intelligence Community] agencies and components," and to "increase the [intelligence recruiting] pipeline of students ... with emphasis on women and ethnic minorities in critical skill areas." Specifically, ICCAE seeks to "provide internships, co-ops, graduate fellowships and other related opportunities across IC agencies to eligible students and faculty for intelligence studies immersion," and to "support selective international study and regional and overseas travel opportunities to enhance cultural and language immersion." ICCAE's aim is to shower with fellowships, scholarships and grants those universities that are adapting their curricula to align with the political agenda of American intelligence agencies; also to install a portal connecting ICCAE campuses with intelligence agencies, through which students, faculty, students studying abroad, and unknown others will pass. While ICCAE claims to train analysts, rather than members of the clandestine service, the CIA historically has not observed such boundaries.

ICCAE-funded centers have different names at different universities. For example, at the University of Washington (UW), ICCAE funds established the new Institute for National Security Education and Research (INSER), Wayne State University's center is called the Center for Academic Excellence in National Security Intelligence Studies, and Clark Atlantic University's program is the Center for Academic Excellence in National Security Studies.

With the economic downturn, university layoffs became a common occurrence. Need breeds opportunism, as scarcity of funds leads scholars to shift the academic questions they are willing to pursue and suspend ethical and political concerns about funding sources. Other scholars unwilling to set aside ethical and political concerns are keenly aware of institutional pressures to keep their outrage and protests in-house.

Covering Up Dissent

Despite a lack of critical media coverage of ICCAE programs, traces of campus dissent can be found online in faculty senate records. When Dean Van Reidhead at the University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA) brought a proposal for ICCAE to establish a center on campus, some faculty and graduate students spoke out against the damage to academic freedom that the program would likely bring. Senate minutes record that faculty "representatives spoke against and for UTPA submitting a proposal to compete for federal money to establish an Intelligence Community Center for Academic Excellence." At this meeting, graduate students "listed the following demands: 1) inform the community via press release about the possible ICCAE proposal, 2) release the proposal draft for public review, 3) establish a community forum on ICCAE, and 4) abolish the process of applying for ICCAE funds." At Texas-Pan American, as at other ICCAE campuses, administrators noted these concerns but continued with plans to bring the intelligence agencies to campus, as if hearing and ignoring concerns constituted shared governance.

The minutes of the University of Washington's Faculty Senate and Faculty Council on Research record shadows of dissent that are so vaguely referenced that they are easily missed. The minutes for the December 4, 2008, meeting gloss over the issues raised when the American Association of University Professors, University of Washington chapter, had issued a strongly worded statement by Executive Board representative Christoph Giebel, requesting information concerning UW's INSER contacts with the Intelligence Community. The minutes simply read: "... both Giebel and Jeffry Kim [INSER director] answered a series of good questions that resulted in a fair, tough and serious conversation." What these "good questions" were and the nature of this "tough and serious

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conversation" are not mentioned in the minutes, as if "good questions" were not important enough to enter into a public record. Similarly, the nature of faculty objections to INSER are glossed over in the 1/29/09 UW Senate minutes, which simply reported that "a number of email communications have come through the faculty senate that reflect a range in attitude toward the INSER program."

In fact, a significant portion of this faculty "range in attitudes toward the INSER program" is most accurately characterized as outraged. I have heard from faculty at other ICCAE flagship campuses that some form of internal dissent has occurred on each of their campuses, and professors at UW have sent me documents, quoted below, clarifying the extent of the campus's disquiet over the intelligence agencies insertion into their campus; an insertion whose success should be described as a silent coup.

Faculty and students' public silence at ICCAE universities over these developments needs some comment. The post-9/11 political climate casts a pall of orthodoxy over critical discussions of militarization and national security, and the rise of anti-intellectual media pundits attacking those who question increasing American militarization adds pressure to muzzle dissent. Faculty at public universities often feel these pressures more than their colleagues at private institutions. There are also natural inclinations to try and keep elements of workplace dissent internal, but two factors argue against this public silence. First, most of the ICCAE institutions are publicly funded universities drawing state taxes; the state citizens funding these universities deserve to be alerted to concerns over the ways these programs can damage public institutions. Second, university administrators have been free to ignore faculty's harsh, publicly silent, internal dissent. Keeping dissent internal has not been an effective resistance tactic.

Inaudible Uproar at UW

In a step moving beyond internal private critiques of ICCAE programs, multiple professors at the University of Washington have provided me internal memos sent by professors to administrators. These memos document the breadth of internal faculty dissent over administrators' October 2006 decisions to bring the CIA and other intelligence agencies to the UW campus.

Initially, the UW administration appeared to appreciate faculty concerns. In October 2005, David Hodge, UW dean of Arts and Sciences, met with School of International Studies faculty to discuss proposals to establish affiliations with U.S. intelligence agencies, after International Studies faculty wrote the administration, expressing opposition to any affiliation linking them with the CIA and other intelligence agencies. This group of faculty wrote that such developments would "jeopardize the abilities of faculty and students to gain and maintain foreign research and study permits, visas, and open access to and unfettered interaction with international research hosts,

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partners, and counterpart institutions," and they worried that any such relationships would "endanger the safety and security of faculty and students studying and conducting research abroad as well as their foreign hosts." One participant in these meetings told me that the administration initially acknowledged that there were serious risks that students and faculty working abroad could lose research opportunities because of the CIA-linked program on campus, and that these concerns led the administration initially to decline any affiliation with these intelligence agency-linked programs.

But these concerns did not derail the administration's interest in bringing the Intelligence Community on campus, and the following year the administration of UW decided to establish the ICCAE-funded Institute for National Security Education and Research. But after INSER's launch, concerned internal memos continued to come from faculty across the campus. In the past year and a half, letters voicing strong protest from at least five academic units have been sent by groups of faculty to deans.

In October 2008, anthropology professors Bettina Shell-Duncan and Janelle Taylor drafted a critical memo that was voted on and approved by the anthropology faculty and then sent to Dean Howard, Dean Cauce, and Provost Wise, raising fears about the damage INSER could bring to the University:

"As anthropologists, we also have more specific concerns relating to the nature of our research, which involves long-term in-depth studies of communities, the majority of which are located outside the United States. Some of these communities are very poor, some face repressive governments, and some are on the receiving end of U.S. projections of military power ... our profession's Code of Ethics requires first and foremost that we cause no harm to the people among whom we conduct research."

Shell-Duncan and Taylor tied disciplinary concerns to anthropology's core ethical principles and raised apprehensions that INSER funding could convert the university into a hosting facility for "military intelligence-gathering efforts." They pointed to:

"1) the reports that students are required to submit to INSER at the end of their studies, and 2) the debriefing that they are required to undergo upon their return. Although our faculty have already been asked [to be] academic advisors for students with INSER funding, we have never been given any information on the guidelines for the reports, or the nature, scope or purpose of the debriefing process. This is of particular concern given that National Security is not an academic field of study but a military and government effort. Unless and until we are provided with clear and compelling information that proves otherwise, we must infer that these reports and debriefings are, in fact, military intelligence-gathering efforts."

They cited a 2007 report (of which I am a co-author) written by an American Anthropological Association (AAA) commission, evaluating a variety of engagements between anthropologists and the military and intelligence agencies. The anthropologists argued that this AAA report found that while "...some forms of engagement with these agencies might be laudable, the Commission also issued cautions about situations likely to

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entail violations of the ethical principles of our profession. In particular, the members of the Commission expressed serious concern about 'a situation in which anthropologists would be performing fieldwork on behalf of a military or intelligence program, among a local population, for the purpose of supporting operations on the ground.'"

Other academic departments wrote the UW administration expressing concerns. In November 2008, members of the Latin American Studies division in the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies complained to the administration in a memo that "in light of the U.S. Intelligence Community's extensive track-record of undermining democracies and involvement in human rights violations in Latin America and elsewhere, we find it unconscionable that the UW would have formal ties with the newly created Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), let alone involve our students in an exercise of gathering intelligence information and assist it with its public relations campaign among children in our local schools. The most recent examples of the U.S. Intelligence Community's inexcusable behavior in Latin America are torture at Guantanamo detention centers, collaboration with the infamous School of the Americas, the backing of paramilitary forces as part of the 'drug war,' ... and support for the failed coup in Venezuela…

"…Some would argue that UW should engage the Intelligence Community as a method of constructively influencing or reforming it. To our mind, this argument is naïve and misguided at best. The training we provide is unlikely to change the deeply entrenched institutional cultures among the various entities, such as the CIA, which form a part of ODNI. In effect, then, we would be enabling the Intelligence Community to be more effective at carrying out their indefensible activities ... We realize that the UW faces a number of financial constraints, perhaps now more than ever, but the needs for monies can never justify collaboration with an Intelligence Community, which is responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths and immeasurable human suffering throughout the world."

Also at UW a group of Southeast Asian Studies Center faculty and members of the History Department questioned whether the administration had considered how the presence of INSER on campus would taint professors and students because, in the words of the group in the History Department, "The professional bodies of many disciplines and professional programs have barred members from participating in programs funded by groups like the CIA due to the ethical conflicts such a relationship would involve. Did the administration take this into account in the process of creating INSER? Are there steps taken in the administration of funds from INSER to prevent faculty from unknowingly compromising their professional and ethical obligations?"

"We find it unconscionable that the UW would have formal ties with the newly created Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), let alone involve our students in an exercise of gathering intelligence information."

Among the problems facing the UW administration in creating INSER was finding an academic structure to administer such a stigmatized program.Because the social sciences represented hostile territory, administrators looked to the Information School. But Information School faculty weren't happy about having to house INSER. A letter signed by a dozen prominent Information School faculty members expressed deep concerns that housing "a CIA Officer in Residence" would pollute perceptions of them in ways that could "damage our ability to serve the [other campus constituencies]," arguing that their longstanding "strategy of impartial professionalism" across the campus "has enabled us to create collections of such depth over the years. It is also this professional independence that has in the past protected us from undue scrutiny by the governments of the countries that we visit and from which we solicit information sources – sometimes of the most sensitive nature – for our scholarly collections."

While it is encouraging to find UW faculty raising ethical, historical, and political objections, it's far from clear that these private critiques had any measurable effect, precisely because they remained private.

UW: The Dark Side

Today, INSER hosts at least one CIA funded post-doc on the UW campus. It is unknown how many CIA-linked employees or CIA-linked students are now on the UW's campus. We don't know what all members of the intelligence agencies on campus are doing, but scholars who study the history of the agency know that in the past CIA campus operatives have performed a range of activities that included using funding fronts to get unwitting social scientists to conduct pieces of research that were used to construct an interrogation and torture manual; to establish contacts used to recruit foreign students to collect intelligence for the CIA; and debriefing of graduate students upon return from foreign travel of research. We know historically that the CIA has cultivated relationships with professors in order to recruit students. When universities import ICCAE programs, they bring this history with them, and, as students from ICCAE universities travel abroad, suspicions of CIA activity will travel with them and undermine the safety and opportunities to work and study abroad for all.

There are many good reasons to keep the CIA off campus, the most obvious ones stress the reprehensible deeds of the agency's past (and present). For me one good reason is that this Intelligence Community invasion diminishes America's intelligence capacity while damaging academia. As the Intelligence Community's "institutional culture" seeps into ICCAE universities, we can foresee a deadening of intellect, weakening American universities and intelligence capacities as scholars learn to think in increasingly narrow ways, described by President Eisenhower half a century ago in his farewell address's warning that "a government contract becomes virtually a substitute for intellectual curiosity."

If the United States wants intelligence reform, it needs to fund independent scholarship, not narrow the range of discourse on our campuses by paying cash-strapped universities to house revolving doors between the academy and the CIA.

Universities need to be places where

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people can freely explore ideas, but ICCAE inevitably brings chills to open classrooms. How long will it take until students at ICCAE universities start to wonder about who's reporting on free-flowing discussions in classes? With cadres of future FBI and CIA employees on campus, those who develop dissident political critiques will find themselves opting for a choice between speaking their mind, or keeping silent, or softening harsh honest critiques. As ICCAE students graduate and begin careers requiring security clearances, accounts of academic discussions stand to make their way into intelligence files, as clearance background checks ask for accounts of known "subversive" acquaintances encountered during university years.

These are foreseeable consequences. Now, that the Patriot Act removed legal firewalls prohibiting these forms of political surveillance, the stage has been set for a dark renaissance of the fifties to begin.

Ending the Silence

If students, faculty and citizens are concerned about ICCAE's impact on our universities, then breaking the silence is the most effective opposition tactic available. Anyone who wants specific information on contacts between university administrators and ICCAE officials and the intelligence community can use state public records laws and federal Freedom of Information laws to request records. Given university administrators' claims that everything is above board, these records should not be blocked by national security exemptions; if they are, this would be useful to know. Concerned members of individual campuses can use these tools to access correspondence and verify claims by university administrators about the nature of their contact with ICCAE.

Faculty, staff, students, alumni and community members concerned about ICCAE's presence on university campuses should form consortia online to share information from various campuses and make common cause. ICCAE has made rapid headway because of the internal campus-specific, isolated nature of resistance to ICCAE. Something like an "ICCAE Watch" or "CIA Campus Watch" website could be started by a faculty member or grad student on an ICCAE campus, providing forums to collect documents, stories and resistance tactics from across the country.

Finally, tenured professors on ICCAE campuses, or on campuses contemplating ICCAE programs, need to use their tenure and speak out, on the record, in public: the threats presented by these developments are exactly why tenure exists. If professors like the idea of bringing the CIA on campus, they can publicly express these views, but the split between the public and private reactions to ICCAE helped usher the CIA silently back onto American university campuses. The intelligence agencies thrive on silence. If this move is to be countered, academic voices must publicly demand that the CIA and the Intelligence Community explain themselves and their history in public. **CP**

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averaged 3,700 tons per acre during the Taliban years) to a peak of 8,200 tons (equivalent to over two years' global consumption) in 2007. Today, Afghanistan still accounts for over 90 per cent of the world production of opium.

Americans are less aware that heroin use in Iran and Russia has exploded as a result. Iran has the highest rate of opiate addiction in the world. The Iranian government announced that almost one million of its citizens between the ages of 15 and 64 are addicted to heroin and opium, and 130,000 new addicts join their ranks every year. In Russia, Afghan opium is near the heart of an unnerving public health and demographic crisis. Russia is now the largest heroin consumer in the world, accounting for 21 per cent of global demand. With an estimated 3 to 5 million addicts, its addiction rate of approximately 2 per cent is one of the highest in the world.

Of particular concern to Russia, which is struggling to regain its geopolitical heft in the post-Soviet era, heroin addiction is concentrated in the young – two-thirds of Russia's addicts are under the age of 30 – and, in the era of high purity heroin and HIV, usually fatal within 5 to 7 years of the commencement of addiction.

In November 2009, Viktor Ivanov, head of the Russian Federal Drugs Control Service, declared dramatically that every one of the 400,000 heroin addicts registered by the government in 2001 were now dead. Anywhere from 30,000-50,000 drug addicts die each year in Russia, contributing to the demographic crisis that has seen Russia's population decline steadily from a peak of 148 million in 1992, headed for a possible crash to 128 million by 2025.

Both Iran and Russia regard Afghanistan's runaway opium production as the source of their problem. This production is a matter of some embarrassment to the United States, whose efforts to control opium production have failed spectacularly. Western forces, with a brief to chase terrorists and not antagonize nonhostile warlords, landowners and officials (often one in the same) deeply involved in the drug business, have soft-pedaled opium eradication ever since the invasion.

The head of the U.N. Office of Drug Control (UNODC), Antonio Maria Costa, described Western eradication efforts as "a sad joke." Indeed, a remarkable defensiveness – an epidemic of handwringing, hand-washing and finger-pointing, one might say – permeates Western discussion of the Afghan drug issue and its impact on its neighbors, at the government, think tank, and NGO levels.

Since the U.S.-led invasion evicted the Taliban from power in 2002 and Afghan opium production soared, Russian opiate addiction rates increased 400 per cent. In Iran, as the price of opiates plummeted, dealers introduced a potent, smokable form of compressed heroin known as "crack" (not to be confused with crack cocaine), which now dominates opiate consumption inside that country. The correlation between easy access to illegal drugs and drug addiction problems is relatively clear-cut.

The UNODC reports that as Afghanistan became the world center of opium production, the earlier production base centered on Myanmar has declined, and so have addiction rates in the surrounding area.

Both Iran and Russia regard U.S. actions on the Afghan drug problem as a key barometer of Washington's sincerity in engagement with them. After nonstop antagonism during the Bush

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administration, Iran and Russia looked forward to an Obama reset: a new look at Afghanistan and re-engagement with important stakeholders in Tehran and Moscow on the issues of drug trafficking and regional security. They were disappointed, especially Iran.

Tehran has made enormous efforts in the battle against Afghan opium. Iran, the transit or ultimate destination for about 40 per cent of Afghanistan's opiates, leads the world by a wide margin in total seizures of heroin and opium. At the same time that the Afghan government is able to seize less than 2 per cent of its own country's production, Iran has been able to intercept perhaps 20 per cent – about 150 tons per year – of the Afghan opium entering its borders.

Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, over 3,700 border guards have been killed in battles with drug smugglers, and another 12,000 injured. Tehran has invested over $900 million in an immense network of trenches, roads and fortifications along its borders with Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Ahmadinejad regime apparently hoped that Iran's efforts in intercepting the flood of Afghan opium destined for the European market would burnish its international image as a responsible actor in world affairs.

For Russia, its attempts to win American acknowledgement of its stake in suppressing the Afghan opium industry has been complicated by Russia's resentment that America is in Afghanistan in the first place and Washington's concerted efforts to expand its Central Asian beachhead into the ex-Soviet nations – Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan – at Russia's expense.

Furthermore, the Russian leadership regards conquering its drug crisis as a key element in its strategy for national regeneration.

The choice of Viktor Ivanov – an ex-KGB officer with Afghan experience, a key member of Vladimir Putin's inner circle, and a vocal advocate of "sovereign democracy," Russia's authoritarian alternative to liberal democracy – as the director of the Federal Drug Control Service is a sign of the ideological, national security, and international strategic dimensions of Russia's drug war. When Ivanov announced, in March 2009, that Russia had become the world's number one consumer of heroin, he framed the issue in the starkest terms: "Drug trafficking has become a key negative factor for demography and a blow to our nation's gene pool ... [and] a challenge to Russia's civilization."

Moscow is frustrated by the West's seemingly conjoined desires to shut Russia out of Afghanistan and let drug production flourish there. Its inability to get the U.S.A. to deal with the supply side has colored Russia's view on how to deal with the demand side as well. Russia is engaged in a multiyear slanging match with Western NGOs over its unwillingness to promote methadone therapy for Russian heroin addicts.

Russia's drug control leadership apparently regards the heroin crisis as a transient phenomenon, created largely by the collapse of political authority in Afghanistan and America's willingness to allow opium production to run wild there. A Russian heroin addict reportedly has a life expectancy of five to seven years (versus 15 to 20 years in the West). By Russia's calculus, if the supply problem can be licked, the demand problem will take care of itself within a decade. Therefore, Russia strongly resists the idea that it should institutionalize its drug problem by creating a generation of methadone junkies so that the United States can be spared the inconvenience of alienating the Karzai regime's drug-dealing satraps with an aggressive anti-opium policy.

Western forces, with a brief to chase terrorists and not antagonize nonhostile warlords, landowners and officials (often one in the same) deeply involved in the drug business, have soft-pedaled opium eradication.

Russia has devoted much energy to championing its "Collective Security Treaty Organization" (CSTO), composed of a grab bag of ex-Soviet states, as the vehicle for restored Russian regional leadership and NATO's proper interlocutor in North and Central Asia. The West has steadfastly ignored the CSTO, while working to wedge off ambivalent or indifferent members of the alliance, such as Turkmenistan. Dogged by historical enmities with its former republics, energy competition, and the desire of the "stans" to play off Moscow, Washington and Beijing to their advantage, Russia has had little success in constructing a regional security alliance centered on opposition to narco-trafficking.

A 2008 quote from the head of the CSTO illustrates the way divergent U.S. and Russian drug policies exacerbated the divisions between the two blocs:

"Nikolai Bordyuzha, CSTO Secretary-General, quoted a Pentagon general as telling him: 'We are not fighting narcotics because this is not our task in Afghanistan.'

"Instead of joining hands with the SCO and the CSTO in combating the narcotics threat, the CSTO chief said, the U.S. was working to set up rival security structures in the region. Washington is working to 'drive a geopolitical wedge between Central Asian countries and Russia and to re-orient the region toward the U.S.,' Bordyuzha said last year."

The indications are that matters may get even worse. As the U.S. adventure in Afghanistan has faltered, the Obama administration has looked at its tactical options and decided that increased tolerance of opium production is part of the solution, rather than the problem. After all, the Taliban itself does not grow or traffic opium; it merely taxes production, processing and trade. The primary participants in the opium industry, from farmers to warlords to corrupt officials, are not Taliban. In another sense, they can be considered actual or potential allies of the United States, to be pried out of Afghanistan's anti-Western matrix with the lever of opium. This alliance goes back to the CIA's vast operation against the left, land-reforming regimes in Afghanistan of the late 1970s, where poppy-growing land barons were an important part of the coalition patronized by the Agency.

Richard Holbrooke, a relentless hearts-and-minds proselytizer from his days in Vietnam, had consistently argued against opium eradication. In June 2009, when he became the Obama administration's Af-Pak overlord, he carried the day, and the U.S. formally abandoned a goal of opium eradication in Afghanistan.

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Holbrooke undertook a public-relations push to soften the blow. To justify the reversal on eradication to the domestic national security constituency, he made the assertion that suitcases of money from the Middle East, not opium, was the major source of Taliban revenues. The new line was presented by the *New York Times* in October 2009:

"'In the past, there was a kind of a feeling that the money all came from drugs in Afghanistan,' Richard Holbrooke, the administration's special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, said in June. 'That is simply not true.'

"Supporting this view, in his August 30 strategic assessment, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the top NATO commander in Afghanistan, voiced skepticism that clamping down on the opium trade would crimp the Taliban's overall finances. 'Eliminating insurgent access to narco-profits – even if possible, and while disruptive – would not destroy their ability to operate so long as other funding sources remained intact,' General McChrystal said."

According to the UNODC, the Taliban exacts over $100 million annually in tax on opium growers, protection money exacted from drug processing and transport, and zakat ("conscience money") on narcotic-related economic activity. This would seem enough to provide the lion's share of support to an insurgency that pays each of its 30,000 (at most) fighters around $4,000 per year.

Nevertheless, in its most recent report on Afghanistan, the UNODC gave support to Holbrooke's finding by accepting an estimate of yearly Taliban expenses of $800 million to $1 billion, which would limit opium income to only 15 per cent of the Taliban's necessary revenues – less than half of previous estimates. The methodology may be questionable, but opium suppression has been unambiguously decoupled from the West's anti-Taliban campaign.

Moscow was not pleased. Viktor Ivanov, who had called for the United States to undertake aerial spraying against Afghanistan's poppy fields – the same strategy the U.S.A. employs against coca production in Colombia – registered his disappointment with the 180-degree switch in eradication policy in a meeting with Holbrooke in Moscow in November 2009.

To mollify the international audience, Holbrooke declared that the U.S. anti-opiate campaign in Afghanistan would switch its focus to disrupting the trade (as opposed to production) of opium and go after the "big fish."

Western media reported breathlessly on a "high stakes raid" involving "a Drug Enforcement Agency team and Afghan counternarcotics agents staging an ambitious helicopter-borne assault in potentially hostile territory" which included "a 37-man assault team, a pair of Afghan Mi-17 helicopters, five UH-1H Hueys and a Douglas DC-3 configured as a surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft."

The raid netted 4,300kg of hash, 99kg of raw opium, and "a bag of poppy seeds." For those keeping score at home, the

Russian correspondent Arkady Dubnov reported that his sources among Afghan officials claim that 85 per cent of the drugs produced in Afghanistan's southern and western provinces are shipped abroad on U.S. planes.

UNODC tells us opium wholesales for less than $100 a kilogram in Kabul and cannabis resin about $56 per kilo, implying that this colossal operation eliminated $10,000 worth of opium and put an overall dent of less than $300,000 in Afghanistan's drug trade, whose actual farm-gate turnover (as opposed to notional street value of the drugs in Europe) exceeds $1 billion per year.

The overworked Iranian drug agencies seize, on the average, almost 100kg of Afghan opium equivalents *per hour*.

Cynics might speculate that considerably greater results could have been achieved by walking into the office of the governor of Kandahar to arrest Hamid Karzai's brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, who is allegedly involved deeply in the drug trade.

The Russians have stated their willingness to assist Afghanistan's anti-trafficking activities by providing their own blacklist of "big fish": about 40 members of the Karzai government, including members of parliament, senators and field commanders, involved in the drug trade.

However, the United States – which was unable to dislodge Karzai from the presidential palace despite compelling evidence that he rigged his re-election – is unlikely to cripple its local client with a devastating purge.

Holbrooke's hidden agenda in tolerating drug production perhaps extends from coddling the publicly acknowledged usual suspects – Afghan farmers, warlords and corrupt officials associated with the Karzai regime – to offering an opium carrot to the so-called good Taliban (actually, Pashtun militants such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, whose insurgent and heroin-related activities go back to the anti-Soviet jihad and predate even the existence of the Taliban) whom the West has been trying to lure into the Afghan government for years. Hekmatyar has a long history of opium trafficking expedited by his sponsors inside Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency. As Cockburn & St. Clair reported in their book on U.S. foreign policy, the CIA and the drug trade, *Whiteout*, Hekmatyar supported his operations and enriched his patrons in Pakistan both with exactions on production and

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trade and enthusiastic participation in a heroin-refining and smuggling organization in eastern Afghanistan and western Pakistan that brought hundreds of millions of dollars of opiates to Western markets.

After the privileged players – farmers, useful government officials, vital warlords and "good Taliban" – are struck from the list of targets, America's new opium policy in Afghanistan may very well boil down to selective enforcement for purposes of international public relations and domestic harassment of insufficiently obedient or useful assets. In fact, mathematics provide a clue that the United States may have given up on the opium trade altogether.

Based on relatively stable worldwide opium demand of about 3,500-3,700 tons per year and runaway production in Afghanistan at the 6-7,000 ton levels in recent years without a collapse in price, the UNODC suspects that the drug gangs and insurgents are stockpiling perhaps 12,000 tons – over two years worth of opium – at sites around Afghanistan in order to prop up prices.

The Obama administration's window for good things to happen in Afghanistan is about 18 months. So, it would be understandable, if not praiseworthy, if Holbrooke & Co. took the short-term view and decided there was no point in harassing Afghan farmers if the drug dealers could make up any shortfall over the next two years simply by selling off inventory. Therefore, America's indifference to the domestic as well as regional consequences of Afghan opium production is well-nigh complete.

Some in Iran and Russia believe that the United States is happy to see the resources and energy of the two nations squandered on the drug war, and also suspect there is a conscious plan beyond mere malign neglect at work. Vladimir Putin saw signs of "narco-aggression" against Russia and Europe in the dilatory U.S. stance on Afghan opium. Ivanov has characterized the current situation as "a new opium war."

The Russian press has alleged that U.S. and NATO forces have moved beyond tolerating opium production to facilitating its transport, much as the CIA transported drugs out of Laos during the Vietnam conflict to support its local clients. In an article he wrote for *Vremya Novostei* in November 2007, Russian correspondent Arkady Dubnov reported that his sources among Afghan officials claim that 85 per cent of the drugs produced in Afghanistan's southern and western provinces are shipped abroad on U.S. planes.

Even without direct U.S. involvement in the opiate trade, from the perspective of Russia and Iran, what the United States has done in Afghanistan is already bad enough. Through whatever combination of incapacity and design, the U.S. has allowed opium production to flourish inside Afghanistan.

America's inability to pacify Afghanistan and suppress the opium trade, and its unwillingness to address or even acknowledge the transnational consequence of its failure, or go beyond a zero-sum vision of its regional competition with Russia, will leave a toxic residue in Central Asia for years to come. **CP**

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